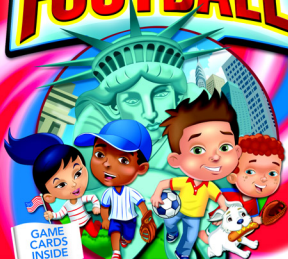


FRANK LAMPARD

FRANKIE'S MAGIC FOOTBALL



GAME
CARDS
INSIDE

FRANKIE'S NEW YORK ADVENTURE



CHAPTER 1

Frankie ran out on to the school field in his PE kit, excited about another game of football. The other kids were already doing stretches, and Charlie had his goalie gloves on. Charlie *a/ways* had his gloves on. He never knew when he might be called on to save a goal. Louise

was doing keep-me-ups. As Frankie approached, she turned and blasted a low curling shot at Charlie. He was still stretching, but dropped to his right and snatched up the ball.

“Always ready!” he said. “You won’t catch me out.”

He tossed the ball back, but a hand caught it in the air. It was Mr Donald, their PE teacher. He was carrying a sack, and kicked the football back towards the sidelines. “Won’t be needing that today,” he said.

“What?” gasped Frankie. “How are we going to play football without a football?”

"Donaldo's gone nuts," muttered Charlie.

"I heard that!" said their teacher, with a smile. "We're going to do something a little different." He turned the sack upside down and out fell a long wooden bat, a small ball, a glove and some plastic cones.

"Baseball!" said Louise.

"That's right, Louise," said Mr Donald. "Football isn't the only sport in the world."

Frankie knew he was right, but he was still a bit disappointed.

Mr Donald began to lay out the cones in a diamond shape around the field. "Baseball is all about

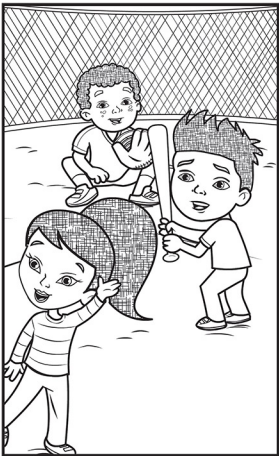
tactics, hand-eye coordination and running," he said. "It might help your football game in ways you don't realise. In the United States, baseball is the national game, just like football is here."

"Can't hurt to try," said Louise, looking at the others.

Frankie shrugged. "Why not?" he agreed.

Five minutes later, Frankie stood with his feet planted on a batting plate, holding the baseball bat in his hands. Charlie crouched behind him, wearing a mitt.

"I'll bowl!" said Louise.



"It's called 'pitching'," Mr Donald explained, throwing her the baseball. "Right class, the rules are very straightforward – the batter gets three chances to hit the ball. If he misses and Charlie catches it, it's called a 'strike'. Three strikes and you're out. Understand?"

They all nodded. Frankie thought he was keeping up.

"Good. The other way you can be out is if you try to run to one of the bases and someone gets there before you with the ball." Their teacher took a big breath. "Or you can be caught out."

Charlie whispered to Frankie,

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“About the same number of rules as football, then.”

The rest of the class were either fielding, which meant standing around in the field waiting to catch the ball if Frankie hit it, or lined up ready to bat.

“Ready?” said Louise.

Frankie nodded, hands tightening on the bat.

Louise drew back her arm, then hurled the baseball. It flew so fast that Frankie hardly saw it. He swung the bat, but heard a *thud* behind him. He turned and saw the ball in Charlie’s mitt. How did that happen?

"Strike one!" called Mr Donald.

"Great pitch, Louise."

She grinned as Charlie threw the ball back to her.

"Watch the ball, Frankie," said Mr Donald.

Frankie took a deep breath, lifting the bat again. *I'll be quicker this time*, he promised himself.

Louise tossed the ball from hand to hand, then pitched again. The ball seemed to curve in the air. Frankie swung with all his strength, spinning off-balance.

Thud.

"Strike two!"

Frankie couldn't believe it.